

11/2/68
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

"Area Board Retort"

In a recent Newark Evening News article, Dr. L. Sylvester Odom, executive director of the United Community Corporation, sharply criticized neighborhood area boards stating "they have become privileged enclaves, little empires far removed from any supervision." Other ~~hidden~~ innuendoes were made.

Therefore, as one of eight dutiful elected area board presidents, serving in an unsalaried position and striving to provide a great good for a great number, I sincerely believe a response is in order.

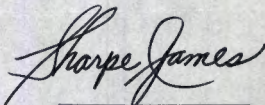
Firstly, it was interesting to note in the article, that Dr. Odom continued his courageous practice of attacking "invisible" people and programs. Although disseminating serious charges of improper area board action, thus baring wounds and unscrupulously indicting the integrity of others, no names or specifics were given. As a taxpayer this is certainly a unique posture for the UCC executive director. In essence, we have Dr. Odom attacking individuals and programs for which he is the chief administrator and supervisor of, without documentation, and if true without recommendations for community improvement. Certainly this action is contrary to all sane administrative procedures when safeguarding the public interest and funds.

Also, Dr. Odom having ignored all correspondences from this president on area board activities and problems, and having refused to visit area boards, is in no position to constantly harass and indict others. Nevertheless, I would be irresponsible if I did not agree that all area boards could not operate more efficiently. However, the same must be said for UCC when measuring its cost for operation against tangible benefits for poor people. In fact, Dr. Odom himself is no true "ambassador of the war on poverty." Considering his UCC salary of \$24,000, a reported \$8,000 plus salary as pastor of St. Matthew's AME Church in Orange, and a free house with other incomes. ^{AND} ~~Since~~ since no man of the cloth provide part time services, Dr. Odom has the luxury of drawing income from two full time jobs. I charge that Dr. Odom could spend more time on the job at 449 Central Avenue.

Finally, since finding fault is an easy thing to do, ^{we} accept the challenge of working with others in order to improve the operation of neighborhood area boards and UCC. The public has entrusted us with the responsibility of implementing programs to uplift the less fortunate and underprivileged.

Thus I invite Dr. Odom to meet with all area board presidents, in order to explore better ways to best serve the community.

SHARPE JAMES,
PRESIDENT
WEEQUAHIC OPPORTUNITY CENTER
AREA BOARD NUMBER 9



Home 926-4359
School 621-2200 Ext. 124

38 Wilbur Ave
Newark